

Update on activities to acquire new IHO Member States

Submitted by:	Secretary-General IHO
Executive Summary:	Two coastal states, namely Cabo Verde and Kiribati acceded to the IHO convention. A high-level visit took place to the Bahamas. Important flag states are still hesitant to accede. Increase in Membership is instrumental for the application of the IHO Work Programme and the proper operation of the Secretariat.
Related document:	Bulletin Report High Level Visit to the Bahamas, 15-19 April 2024

References

- A. IHO Publication P-5 Yearbook

Introduction/Background

1. The Secretariat was delighted to welcome Cabo Verde as 99th and Kiribati as 100th IHO Member State.
2. A high-level visit to the Bahamas was undertaken by IHO Director Luigi Sinapi in April 2024.
3. The Secretariat is in continued dialogue with Lithuania (being the last coastal state in Europe which is not an IHO Member State), Mediterranean, African, South American, Meso-American coastal and land locked states to explain their benefit of an accession to the IHO.

Analysis/Discussion

4. Through assessment of Kiribati the IHO has reached the third digit in membership which symbolizes a remarkable milestone in the history of the Organization.
5. Unfortunately, important flag states such as the Bahamas, Liberia, and Panama have not yet been convinced to join and are not currently IHO members. The Secretariat remains focused on acquiring new members; however, it appears that after rapid growth over the last decade—from 80 member states in 2014 to 100 today—organic growth among coastal states may be reaching a saturation point.
6. To address this, specific actions have been taken towards landlocked states, such as Bolivia, Uganda, and Paraguay. In 2022, the IHO Director, Luigi Sinapi, conducted high-level visit to Bolivia, and contacts were made, and letters sent to their Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The benefits of participating in the IHO's work and activities are not limited to coastal states but extend to the entire international community, including all United Nations members and beyond.

7. For instance, many landlocked states are members of international organizations related to maritime affairs, such as the IMO and IOC-UNESCO. The Secretariat sees potential for similar membership growth in the IHO.

Recommendations

8. The IHO Member States, primarily via their Regional Hydrographic Organizations, are invited to continue to promote the benefits of IHO membership in their respective regions and in their role as the chart producing agency for coastal states who do not run a full-service hydrographic office. The Secretariat stands ready at any time to assist.
9. The IHO Secretariat will pursue further expansion of the IHO membership in line with the IHO Strategic Plan.

Justification and Impacts

10. The global benefits of IHO activities increase if IHO Membership grows. Increase in membership contributions assists the proper operation of the Secretariat and generate resources for measures such as enhancement of standardization of maritime geoinformation and capacity building.

Action Required of the Council

11. The Council is invited to:
 - Take note of the report,
 - Provide guidance on the recommendations made.